

# Memorial names include the jocular and cerebral

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**E**ben Briggs was something of a bon vivant in his day.

Writing about him in an October 1988 edition of the Duxbury Clipper, the late Rev. Robert Canon Merry described Mr. Briggs, an army veteran of the World War I era, as the "number one bachelor in Duxbury" and in all of Plymouth County as well.

Eben was a sought after guest at the local social scene, wrote Rev. Merry, and sometimes at night during the years of Prohibition, he did some rum running with some of his Duxbury pals.

The Briggs name is among those etched into the World War I memorial that was dedicated in 1922 on a spot known as Boomer Square at the junction of Depot and Tremont Streets. The monument was removed from the site after being badly damaged and is now the subject of a restoration drive by a group of Duxbury residents. Money for the restoration has been autho-

rized by the Community Preservation Committee but will need further approval at this year's annual town meeting.

Briggs, born Ebenezer N. Briggs in 1896, was the son of Henry Alton Briggs, originally of Lakeville, and Helen Elizabeth Cushman of Duxbury. He was born on the second floor of the Drew House on Washington Street near where his father operated a stable. He was educated in Duxbury and as a young man worked as a chauffeur. He was drafted into the army and was sworn in at Plymouth on Sept. 2, 1918, a little more than two months before the war ended.

Mr. Briggs spent his life in Duxbury and was a popular figure for decades. He served as fire chief and as a commander at the American Legion. He ran a successful fuel oil company at the corner of Alden Street and Railroad Avenue and in his will, he left \$10,000 to establish a scholarship fund for Duxbury High School graduates.

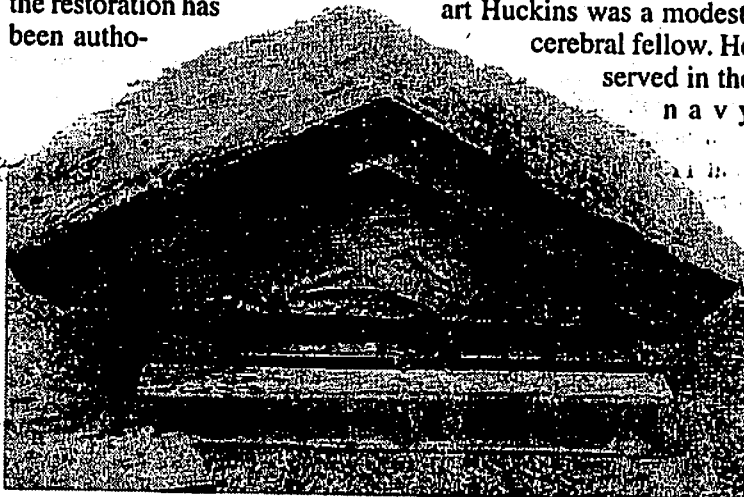
Next to Eben Briggs, Stuart Huckins was a modest, cerebral fellow. He served in the navy

coastal defense after enlisting in October of 1917. The son of Frank and Eva Huckins, Stuart was born in Duxbury in 1896 and educated at the Noble and Greenough School in Dedham. He was a student at Harvard College when the war broke out and returned there to complete his studies after being discharged in January of 1919.

Huckins and his wife, Olga, lived on Powder Point for many years and enjoyed well-earned reputations as learned naturalists. Consider the following item in the Audubon Society Newsletter:

"Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Huckins ... feed wild skunks in their living room. Says Mr. Huckins, 'They're perfectly friendly, and come regularly for their meals, as many as three at a time... Buffy (our cat) has adopted a live-and-let-live attitude toward the skunks, who reciprocate in about the same manner.'

"Mrs. Huckins, a friend of the late Rachael Carson, was credited by the author with suggesting the idea that led to 'The Silent Spring.' Mrs. Huckins, after finding dead birds on her property after an aerial spray of DDT, wrote Rachel Carson about it."



This is the second installment in an occasional series profiling some of the residents named on the World War I memorial. A Town Meeting article asking for Community preservation Act funds to restore the memorial is on the March 14 warrant.